



# Frequently Asked Questions About 21C

## WHAT IS THE SCHOOL OF THE 21ST CENTURY?

The *School of the 21st Century (21C)*, also known as Family Resource Centers in some communities, is a model for school-based or school-linked child care and family support services designed to promote the optimal growth and development of children beginning at birth.

The core components of 21C are:

- guidance and support for parents
- preschool-age child care
- before-, after-school and vacation care for school age children
- health education and services
- networks and training for child care providers
- information and referral services for families

## WHERE HAS THE SCHOOL OF THE 21ST CENTURY BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

Since the model was piloted in Independence, MO in 1988, more than 1200 schools in 20 states have implemented the program. The model has proven successful in urban, rural and suburban areas, as well as in affluent, middle class and poor communities. Both Connecticut and Kentucky have launched statewide initiatives based on the model.

## DO ALL SCHOOLS IMPLEMENT 21C IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY?

The 21C model recognizes that every community is unique, and it is designed to respond flexibly to those differences. Implementation of a 21C program begins with a needs assessment to determine which of the 21C core components are necessary in a given community, and implementation is guided by those findings.

The flexibility of the 21C/FRC model appeals to many diverse communities; each school tailors the model to match its own needs and resources. In many communities, 21C serves as an umbrella for an expanded array of family support services such as adult education, youth development, and social services.

## WHAT IF MY SCHOOL ALREADY HAS SOME OF THE 21C COMPONENTS IN PLACE?

Many schools have one or more of the core 21C components in place before they become a 21C school. If that is the case, 21C provides a guiding framework to explore the need to implement additional child care and family support services, building on what the school and community have already begun.

## HOW DO SCHOOLS PAY FOR 21C SERVICES?

There is enormous variety in the ways that different schools and districts finance their 21C programs. Many schools are able to completely fund the child care components through sliding scale fees paid by parents. In less affluent communities, some 21C services can be paid for through public funds such as Title I. Additionally, low-income families may be eligible for state child care subsidies.

21C schools usually require some initial start-up funds to create or renovate space or pay for outreach components. Start-up grants often come from local foundations, businesses or through reallocation of existing school district funds. Several states have made funding available to launch and support 21C/FRC programs.

## WHO PROVIDES TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN 21C?

Since the inception of 21C, Yale University has provided leadership and technical assistance to 21C schools. In addition to ongoing consultation with 21C schools, the Bush Center also conducts annual training and comprehensive evaluation efforts.

Schools implementing the 21C model are encouraged to join the national *21C Network* established and maintained by Yale. Through the network, Yale keeps 21C schools informed about relevant research, new funding opportunities, and evaluation findings, and schools are able to communicate with each other regarding implementation strategies.

## **DOES 21C TARGET SPECIFIC CHILDREN OR FAMILIES?**

One of the unique strengths of the 21C model is that it does not target at-risk children or their families. Rather, the services are available to all families in a community regardless of income or family circumstances. By using sliding scale fees and other innovative funding strategies, schools make their programs available to all families.

## **DOES 21C WORK?**

Through both process and outcome evaluations at several 21C sites, the Yale University Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy has gathered evidence of the efficacy of the *School of the 21st Century* model. Moreover, 21C builds on individual components that have been successfully evaluated on their own. The findings from both sources provide compelling evidence that 21C benefits children, parents, and the school as a whole. Specifically, evaluations of 21C have identified the following benefits:

For children:

- Enhanced school readiness and improved academic achievement
- Increased consistency of care and time spent with adult supervision
- Reduction in behavioral problems and decreased need for special services

For parents:

- Increased satisfaction and involvement with the school
- Reduction in missed work and stress due to failure of child care arrangements

For schools:

- Enhanced relationships with parents and community
- Greater understanding of the needs of incoming school populations.

## **DOES 21C MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?**

Results from several evaluations of 21C show a positive impact on student achievement. Specifically,

- Children participating in 21C for at least three years evidenced higher scores in mathematics and reading achievement tests than children in a control, non-21C school.
- Children who participated in 21C beginning at age three start kindergarten ready to learn as evidenced by their scores on kindergarten screening tests.

## **WHAT IS THE YALE UNIVERSITY BUSH CENTER?**

The Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy was founded in 1977 to bring current research knowledge about child development into the policy arena with the goal of improving lives of America's children and families through informed public policy. The Bush Center:

- shares information about the developmental needs of children with policy makers;
- analyzes current and proposed policies affecting children;
- conducts policy-related research in child development;
- trains young researchers in policy decision-making; and
- seeks to solve identified problems of children and families -- such as the unmet need for high quality, affordable child care -- through initiatives such as the *School of the 21st Century*.

## **HOW DOES MY SCHOOL BECOME A 21C SCHOOL?**

Each year Yale works intensively with a limited number of schools and school districts on the implementation of the School of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program. To become a 21C school, schools are required to secure support from district and school leaders, develop an action plan for implementation, and attend 21<sup>st</sup> Century School training activities. These steps ensure that the school has the knowledge and the commitment to implement a high-quality program. If your school is interested in becoming a School of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, please contact us.

### **SCHOOL OF THE 21ST CENTURY**

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